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NSC BRIEFING

21 December 1964

VIETNAM

I. Diem's chances for success dimmer than ever.

- A. Quat, able ex-defense minister, barred from cabinet on grounds sects' opposition.
- B. Meanwhile, sects lukewarm toward Diem, fight among selves.
- C. Split with army only superficially healed by Hinh's ouster.

II. Collins gloomy, but would defer final judgment on Diem until early January; if then no improvement, sees three alternatives:

- A. Government under Quat.
- B. Government under Bao Dai, including Diem and Quat.
- C. US withdrawal from Vietnam.

Army review(s) completed.

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III. Meanwhile, French policy seen aiming toward salvage French interests in event expected Viet Minh takeover.

IV. Sainteny's mission major instrument this policy.

A. He accepted by Viet Minh (16 Dec) as official French delegate general to Viet Minh government.

B. Viet Minh press (18 Dec) welcomed representation, said Viet Minh must soon reciprocate.

C. Sainteny's aim:

1. Modus vivendi to ensure French cultural, economic interests in North.
2. Establish basis for similar modus vivendi in South should Viet Minh take over.

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3. Break ground for general  
"coexistence" policy with  
Orbit.

V. Widespread desire in France for  
general policy "coexistence."

- A. Sainteny mission has strong  
non-Communist support in  
National Assembly, particularly  
among Gaullists, Radical  
Socialists.
- B. Le Monde said (4 Dec) necessary  
"make US understand our common  
interest in attempting the  
coexistence experiment, and  
Indochina offers the experi-  
mental ground."

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C. Ex-president Auriol (15 Dec):  
Viet Minh sure to win '56  
elections, hence only French  
chance lies in strict applica-  
tion Geneva agreement. Paris  
should now try reach under-  
standing with both North and  
South governments.

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